Statement by Mr. S. M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister at the High Level Review Meeting of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation, Multi-Stakeholder Roundtable - II on “Enhancing International Support for Small Island Developing States” on September 25, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for your leadership, guidance and support for the cause of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The international community has expressed solidarity with the SIDS since the Barbados Programme of Action and subsequently through the Agenda 21 and the Mauritius International Meeting on Sustainable Development of SIDS. Unfortunately, the declared commitments have not been supported by commensurate global efforts.

The Mauritius Strategy for Implementation of the Barbados Action Plan to strengthen and advance sustainable development in the SIDS has made limited progress in spite of the best efforts by these countries.

The structural deficiencies in SIDS economy arising out of lack of diversification, excessive dependence on tourism and commodities, higher production and transportation costs, small domestic market and vulnerability to external shocks have placed these countries at a clear disadvantage.

The impact of the global financial, food and energy crises has further exacerbated their vulnerabilities and reversed their socio-economic development.

Building resilience in the SIDS to address their structural vulnerabilities must, therefore, continue to be the central plank of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation.

Mr. Chairman,
India fully recognizes the significant threats posed by climate change to the SIDS and the urgency to address the need for adaptation, mitigation, financial and technological support to these countries to develop an effective response.

Our consciousness of the situation is particularly deep since we too have large and vulnerable populations living on our island chains and in low lying coastal areas.

India fully supports a firm demonstration of greater sensitivity and a more concrete response to the urgent adaptation needs of the Small Island Developing States as part of any emerging outcome of the ongoing multilateral negotiations.

The financial pledges made at Copenhagen including the Fast Start Funds must be fulfilled at the earliest. We would urge the developed countries to disburse these funds without further delay, under the overall supervision of the UNFCCC, to meet the urgent adaptation needs of the SIDS for whom climate change poses an existential threat.

The strategies adopted by the SIDS to build their renewable energy capabilities in wind and solar power, and waste to energy systems are steps in the right direction to lessen dependence on fossil fuel imports.

Food production is vital to sustainable development and we appreciate and support the steps taken by the SIDS in developing aquaculture systems to enhance food availability. The international community must address the specific concerns of the sea fishing industries in these countries and ensure that food security is given primacy over short-term market needs.

Mr. Chairman,

SIDS urgently need adequate financial resources - access to ODA, FDI and other forms of external capital flows - capacity building, market access, and technology transfer to address their special needs.

I take this opportunity to urge our developed country partners to fulfill their promise made and extend 0.7% of their GNI to global development agenda.

Addressing debt sustainability amongst the SIDS remains a leading challenge. India supports policies that provide safer debt instruments and limit destabilizing capital flows.

The international community needs to pay particular attention to assisting the SIDS through strengthening national disaggregated data and information systems and developing strategies to enhance disaster management capabilities in them.
Mr. Chairman,

We believe that capacity building in the SIDS holds the key to sustainable development. We are willing to help the SIDS in whatever way we can - within our resources and as part of our South-South cooperation, to share our experience and expertise in the fields of climate-friendly technologies and sustainable development to supplement their national programmes.

Our cooperation has been in diverse sectors, and has included climate change adaptation, information and communication technology, waste management systems, remote sensing, hydrographic survey, telemedicine, public transport, education, irrigation systems, fisheries, and agriculture and food security.

Permit me, however, to stress that efforts by fellow developing countries cannot be a substitute for the efforts required from our developed partners.

India remains steadfast in its effort for the holistic and sustainable development of the Small Island Developing States.

Thank You.